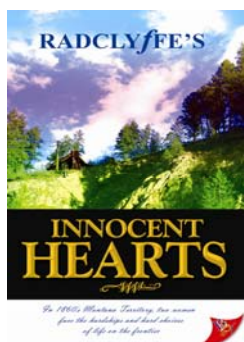


Book Review: November 2005

by Kathi Isserman (reviewer at [JAW](#))



Innocent Hearts, 2nd ed.

Radclyffe

ISBN: 1-933110-21-X

Trade paper, 200 pp, \$15.95

October, 2005

Lesbian Romance

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

www.boldstrokesbooks.com

Just About Write

Web site:

www.justaboutwrite.com

Nann Dunne

Editor-in-Chief

& Publisher

(The second edition is extensively revised with 7500 added words.)

Throughout history the American Dream can be depicted as taking us where our hearts lead us, forging new frontiers. What we "should" do is not in the pioneer spirit. Set in the Montana territory of 1865, *Innocent Hearts* is the love story of Kate and Jessie, a story born of what we can do if we follow our hearts.

18-year-old Kate Beecher and her parents spend months enduring grueling travel in a wagon train from Boston, Massachusetts, to New Hope in the territory of Montana. Kate is very excited about her new home because she believes she never fit into Boston Society. As she explores New Hope, she runs into cowboy and rancher, Jessie Forbes. Kate is intrigued by this unusual woman who owns a ranch and wears pants and a Stetson. Kate wants to get to know her better so she offers to take Jessie's photograph. As the two spend more time together, they discover feelings unlike any they have experiences before. As Jessie and Kate form a bond, they realize what is truly in their hearts. But with the cruelty and harshness of the frontier, can a love like Jessie's and Kate's last?

As a history buff, I love great period romances, and *Innocent Hearts* is no exception. Radclyffe has written an uncommon love story with beautiful prose that, I believe, is true to the time period. The author has done her homework. The depictions of New Hope and the surrounding land are vivid and alive, capturing the sights, sounds, and smells of the dusty and rugged Montana town. I felt I was transported back in time by the fullness of her scenes. The physical descriptions of the people, streets, and stores give the reader an understanding of 1865 Montana. Unlike Radclyffe's other romances that are heavy on character growth and dialogue, *Innocent Hearts* balances setting with character development and dialogue so we can live the story along with Kate and Jessie.

The strength of this story is its timelessness. Radclyffe, through her moving text, illustrates that our struggles with acceptance of women loving women is as old as time-only the setting changes. The romance is sweet, sensual, and touching. There is a slow discovery of sexual desire, and Jessie and Kate are both confused by these stirrings. Their lovemaking is genuine with not a hint of the 21st century conveyed.

Innocent Hearts and Radclyffe have given us an enlightening history lesson. With insight into another time that exemplifies our differences as women, the story also points out our commonality in our struggles. The magic and wonder of discovering first love and the efforts we take so we can fit in are the same in 1865 as they are in 2005.

With *Innocent Hearts*, the reader discovers the breadth of Radclyffe's talent as a writer and storyteller. She shows us that the courage to love knows no bounds and experiences no limits.

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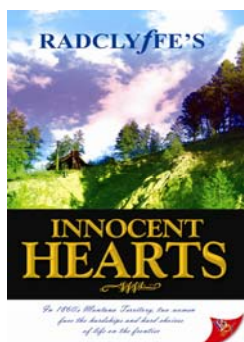
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Book Review: December 12, 2005

by Lynne Jamneck (reviewer at [L-Word Literature](#))



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www.boldstrokesbooks.com

L-word.com Literature

Jacky

L-word.com *Publisher*

Remember Dr. Quinn, Medicine Women? Of course you do. I was reminded of my love\hate relationship with that particular tube-show through the first few chapters of *Innocent Hearts*.

The story has all the ingredients of what any reader who appreciates a good old-west, new frontier adventure: the spirit of freedom, of starting fresh, of discovering not a new frontier within new surroundings but also looking inside and discovering who you, the pioneer, really are at heart.

If you are familiar with Radclyffe's work, you will find what you have come to appreciate about this author's work; generous and beautifully formed characters and a well-paced narrative that never slips into unnecessary detours, and details about her subject matter that will delight and sometimes surprise.

The relationship between well-spoken, smart Kate and pants-wearing (heavens!) rancher Jessie unfolds skillfully from their first meeting, established friendship through their newly discovered feelings of attraction and ultimate consummation. It's a nice change to see the women on both ends of the spectrum move from a place of initial confusion about their attraction to a place of understanding and acceptance.

Radclyffe is one our foremost romance writers, and one can see why. The quality of her writing hardly ever falters. With *Innocent Hearts*, she has once again confirmed that status.

-Lynne Jamneck, author of *Down the Rabbit Hole*

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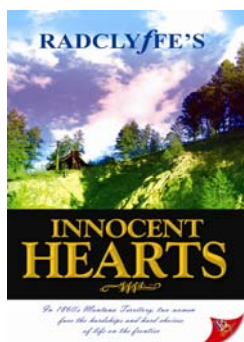
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Book Review: December 2005

by Patricia Pair (reviewer at *Family & Friends*)



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Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

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**Family & Friends
Magazine**

Email: familymag@aol.com

**Patricia Pair
Editor-in-Chief
& Publisher**

It takes some seriously good storytelling to get me to become a fan of any writer, however, after reading *Innocent Hearts*, a 194-page historical romance published by Bold Strokes Books, I'll be first in line to start the Radclyffe Fan Club. I read this thing in one sitting.

Innocent Hearts is the story of a young Bostonian woman, Kate, who moves to the 1860s Montana Territory with her family. She is eager to make the trip feeling that something lies ahead that will change her life.

She is immediately drawn to Jessie Forbes, a young rancher. Kate's feelings twist and turn as she discovers first that Jessie is a woman and then comes to understand her attractions to this different kind of woman.

There's such a sense of realism and compassion in Radclyffe's characters and stories. If you read anything this holiday season, make *it Innocent Hearts*.

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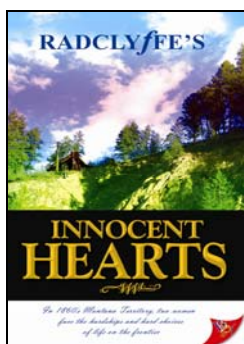
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Book Review: April 7, 2006

by R. Lynne Watson (reviewer at MegaScene Magazine)



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Lesbian Romance

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

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Radclyffe, author of the Honor series and twice winner of the Goldie award, has written a wonderfully engaging historical novel. *Innocent Hearts* is set in the Montana Territory of the 1860's. The Beecher family has left Boston to take over the newspaper in New Hope, Montana Territory. Martin Beecher is a liberal, forward thinking college professor. Martha Beecher is a dutiful wife, bound to follow her husband. Kate, their pretty darkeyed, black haired, vivacious daughter, is the apple of the Beecher's eyes. Kate, however, is not one to follow in her mother's footsteps. She's adventuresome and thrilled by the challenges of the 1860's West.

Jessie Forbes is her father's daughter. He raised her to take over his sizeable horse ranch. When he was trampled in a stampede, young Jessie did just that. In the small community of New Hope, she is accepted as a respectable, successful rancher.

Jessie and Kate form an unlikely friendship. Kate is fascinated by Jessie's freedom. Jessie wears pants, carries a gun, and seems capable of doing anything. Jessie finds Kate bright, funny, and wonderfully feminine. When their friendship deepens, Kate's parents must face their values and weigh what they find important.

Innocent Hearts wonderfully describes the wild Montana Territory, and life in a small frontier town. The people of New Hope, having faced plagues, blizzards, and other dangers have a refreshing 'live and let live' attitude. Radclyffe skillfully draws the characters of the respectable townspeople, and the dancehall queen. If you love a good historic novel, look for this excellent read at your favorite gay and lesbian bookstore.

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